

**BOARD OF VISITORS
GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY**

**Full Board Meeting
Thursday May 1, 2025
Merten Hall, Hazel Conference Room (1201), Fairfax Campus**

MINUTES

PRESENT: Rector Cully Stimson, Vice Rector Mike Meese, Secretary Armand Alacbay, Visitors Horace Blackman, Reginald Brown, Lindsey Burke, Anjan Chimaladinne, Charles Cooper (virtual), William Hansen (virtual), Maureen Ohlhausen, Bob Pence, Jon Peterson, Nancy Prowitt, and Jeff Rosen.

ABSENT: Visitors Caren Merrick and Dolly Oberoi.

ALSO PRESENT: Solon Simmons, Faculty Representative; Carolyn Faith Hoffman, Graduate Student Representative; Maria Cuesta, Undergraduate Student Representative; Rachel Spence, Staff Liaison; Gregory Washington, President; James Anthony, Provost and Executive Vice President; Anne Gentry, University Counsel; and Scott Nichols, Interim Secretary pro tem.

I. Call to Order

Rector Stimson called the meeting to order at 11:00 a.m.

Rector Stimson informed the Board that two board members requested to participate remotely:

- Visitor Cooper due to a personal matter, specifically for personal travel in Switzerland.
- Visitor Hansen due to a personal matter, specifically out of town for work travel in Georgia.

Citing the board's Electronic Meeting Participation policy, Rector Stimson **MOVED** to approve Visitor Cooper and Visitor Hansen's electronic participation in the meeting. The motion was **SECONDED** by Vice Rector Meese. The **MOTION CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE**.

II. Recognitions

A. Honorary Degree Presentation

Rector Stimson introduced Carolyn Peterson to the board as one of George Mason University's founding mothers. A recipient of the Mason Medal with her husband in 2008, her family has funded schools, colleges, scholarships and buildings at the university. She has served on the George Mason Foundation Board of Trustees and is best known for her support of the arts with active roles on the Mason Arts Board and with *ARTS by George!*.

On behalf of the board of Visitors, Rector Stimson conferred upon Mrs. Peterson the Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters. Mrs. Peterson thanked the board and highlighted her time working with every university president and president's wife, remarking at how the university has grown from a single building to what it is today.

B. Appreciation Plaque Presentations to Outgoing Representatives

Rector Stimson recognized the 2024-2025 BOV student representatives, Carolyn Faith Hoffman and Maria A. Romero Cuesta. He presented Ms. Hoffman with a plaque and invited her to introduce her successor.

Ms. Hoffman expressed gratitude to the board, the advisors in the College of Public Health who supported her in her graduate student representative role, and to Maria and the students for their support. Ms. Hoffman then introduced Nilima Mow who will serve as the 2025-2026 President for the Graduate and Professional Student Association (GAPSA) and has been a representative in their general assembly during the past year.

Rector Stimson thanked Ms. Hoffman and invited Ms. Cuesta to receive her plaque and introduce her successor.

Ms. Cuesta extended her gratitude to the board and for her time working alongside Carolyn. She then introduced Isaiah Grays who will serve as the Student Body President for the 2025-2026 academic year. Mr. Grays will be a sophomore studying government international politics.

Rector Stimson also congratulated Solon Simmons for being reelected to a second term as the President of the Faculty Senate.

C. Recognition of Early Identification (EIP) Graduating Students

Rector Stimson recognized the 2025 graduating class of the Early Identification Program (EIP), and directed the board to the history of the program and the names of the graduates located in the board materials. Rector Stimson introduced Dr. Mia Hines, Interim Executive Director of EIP, who thanked the board and President Washington for their support of EIP and for recognizing their graduating seniors.

Dr. Hines proceeded to introduce Meeha Bhuiyan as this year's student speaker. A first-generation Bengali-American and first to pursue higher education in her family, Ms. Bhuiyan is an honors student, majoring in biology with a minor in public health and plans to pursue a Master's of Science in management in the Costello School of Management through the Bachelor's Accelerated Master's program after graduation. Her long-term goal is to attend medical school and become a pediatrician, hoping to open her own clinic and serve minority communities like the one where she grew up.

Ms. Bhuiyan expressed gratitude for the foundation and support of the EIP program. She explained that the EIP program provided her academic and personal support for college and career preparation programming beginning in 8th grade and continuing through 12th grade. After graduating from high school, the EIP program provided a full tuition scholarship to George Mason University and also provided life skills: confidence, patience, and friendship. She thanked the EIP family, Dr. Khaseem Davis, Dr. Mia Hines, Ms. Jasmine Osborne, Ms. Bailey Highsmith, Ms. Gabby Rodriguez, Mr. Bob Lavelle, Erin Muss, and her college mentors. In closing, she added that education is often called the key to unlocking the future, but it is not about unlocking doors but for building a bridge for her community for generations to come.

The Board and members of the gallery recognized the graduates with a standing ovation.

D. Jack Wood Awards Presentation

Rector Stimson noted that the stories for each Jack Wood Award recipient is included in the board materials and in a program placed at their seats. He then introduced Traci Kendall, the Executive Director of Operations and Community and Local Government Relations, to present this year's Jack Wood Awards. Ms. Kendall explained that the award is named after former Fairfax Mayor, John C. "Jack" Wood. Mr. Wood's son joined this segment and assisted with presenting each award alongside President Washington. Ms. Kendall offered congratulatory remarks for the following recipients of the six award categories:

- Community Category:
 - DeShane Jones, BA '18, is this year's recipient and was in attendance to accept his award.
- Student Category:
 - Food Recovery Network (FRN) is this year's recipient and Camila Rosales, President, was in attendance to accept their award.
- Faculty/Staff Category:

- Matt Rice, faculty member in the Department of Geography and Geoinformation Science is this year's recipient and was in attendance to accept his award.
- Government Category:
 - Takis Karantonis, Arlington County Board Chair, is this year's recipient and was in attendance to accept his award.
- Partnership Category:
 - Prince William County Community Services Board and George Mason's College of Public Health partnered to create the Peer Support Specialist Workforce Pipeline and are this year's recipients. Members from both organizations came forward to accept the award.
- Legacy Award:
 - Padmanabhan "Padhu" Seshaiyer, professor and director in the Mathematical Sciences Department, is this year's recipient and was in attendance to accept his award.

Rector Stimson invited all honorees to join the board for lunch and recessed the meeting at 11:43 a.m.

Lunch Recess

Meeting Reconvene

PRESENT: Rector Cully Stimson, Vice Rector Mike Meese, Secretary Armand Alacbay, Visitors Horace Blackman, Reginald Brown, Lindsey Burke, Anjan Chimaladinne, Charles Cooper (virtual), William Hansen (virtual), Maureen Ohlhausen, Bob Pence, Jon Peterson, Nancy Prowitt, and Jeff Rosen.

ABSENT: Visitors Caren Merrick and Dolly Oberoi.

ALSO, PRESENT: Solon Simmons, Faculty Representative; Maria Cuesta, Undergraduate Student Representative; Rachel Spence, Staff Liaison; Gregory Washington, President; James Anthony, Provost and Executive Vice President; Anne Gentry, University Counsel; Dan Stephens, Interim Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer; David Burge, Vice President for Enrollment Management; Sharnnia Artis, Vice President of Access, Compliance and Community; Marvin Lewis, Assistant Vice President and Director of Intercollegiate Athletics; Malcolm Grace, Deputy Athletic Director, Compliance and NCAA Guidance; and Scott Nichols, Interim Secretary pro tem.

III. Approval of the Minutes

Rector Stimson reconvened the meeting at 12:45 p.m.

Rector Stimson called for any corrections to the Full Board Meeting Minutes for February 27, 2025; Full Board Meeting Minutes for April 1, 2025; or the Special Full Board Minutes for April 17, 2025 that were provided for review in the board meeting materials. Hearing no corrections, the meeting minutes stood **APPROVED AS WRITTEN**.

IV. Rector's Report

A. View from the Bridge

Rector Stimson began his report by describing the active engagement of the board, to include:

- April 10 Finance and Land Use Committee meeting on tuition, fees, and land use.
- Visitor Caren Merrick was appointed by Governor Youngkin to the board.
- April 17 Academic Programs, Diversity & University Community Committee meeting that began the discussion of whether to consider a proposal to prohibit race and other protected classes against discrimination in order to comply with a recent executive order along with the Education Department

Dear Colleague letter, directives from Richmond, and compliance with federal law. The board will continue the discussion at this meeting by hearing from university management on the changes to programs, policies, offices, scholarships, etc. that brings the university into compliance with the law.

○ Timeline of the board's DEI review:

- September 2023: creation of an ad hoc DEI Committee, formed under the leadership of Rector Blackman and co-chaired by Visitors Meese and Witeck. The committee held 10 meetings, several one-on-one conversations with professors, and met with students on April 17, 2024 for a two-hour listening session.
- April 2, 2024: the public comment session of the full board meeting included oral and written comments on DEI.
- March 27, 2024: board members attended the Braver Angels/ACTA debate and discussion with students related to DEI.
- May 2024: the full board heard a report from the DEI Committee, *The Mason Way*, making recommendations on the assessment of positions and offices, a campus climate survey, and more.
- November 23, 2024: the campus climate survey on DEI had 311 responses. Members of the DEI committee met with faculty, staff, and students involved in DEI and related offices.
- Board members had other interactions with students on DEI, including the SciTech campus opening, a meeting with graduate students led by Ms. Hoffman, and a more than two-hour meeting with a dozen students led by Ms. Cuesta. Visitor Blackman met with students on April 22, Visitor Alacbay met with students on April 25, and Visitor Brown met with students on April 26.

Rector Stimson personally thanked outgoing Visitors Blackman, Chimaladinne, Oberoi, and Prowitt for their service to the board as their terms expire on July 1, 2025. They will be honored at the October 15 annual BOV recognition event.

Rector Stimson restated his announcement at the Executive Committee meeting of the appointment of Vice Rector Mike Meese and Secretary Armand Alacbay to work with university administration and legal counsel to review and revise the board bylaws, with proposed revisions provided to the board at least 10 days for review and feedback prior to the August 1 annual meeting when they will be put forward for approval.

Rector Stimson concluded with reminding the board that the OSCAR Celebration of Student Scholarship and Impact is on May 6, 2025; Commencement is on Thursday, May 15, 2025 at EagleBank Arena; a private musicale is on May 27; the Annual Planning Conference is Thursday, July 31; and the Annual Meeting is on Friday, August 1, 2025.

B. Board of Visitors Meeting Schedule for 2025-2026 (ACTION ITEM)

C. Board of Visitors Meeting Schedule for 2026-2027 (ACTION ITEM)

Rector Stimson reminded the board that the meeting schedules for 2025-2027 were proposed at the February 27, 2025 meeting and are included in today's meeting materials. No requests were made to consider alternative dates. Rector Stimson then **MOVED** that the Board approve the Board of Visitors Meeting Schedule for 2025-2026 and the Meeting Schedule for 2026-2027 as they are provided in the meeting materials. The motion was **SECONDED** by Visitor Prowitt. The **MOTION CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE**.

V. President's Report

Rector Stimson recognized President Washington who reported the following:

Overview of year-to-date performance:

- A stellar start to the academic year has faced challenges. Presidential Performance metrics, with 25% of the fiscal year remaining:
 - Most metrics are succeeding; there is a slight decline in graduate enrollment of 1.1%, largely due to executive orders. Graduate research expenditures have not risen as hoped due to the research environment nationally. School rankings are mixed.
- Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education added a new classification to include outcomes (measured by student earnings 8 years after graduation) and access (how easy it is to get into the institution). Mason classified as High Access and High Outcomes, the only public R1 institution in the state to achieve this placement. Only 13 of the “large” or “very large” R1 universities (96) in the country are classified High Access and High Outcomes, and only 5 “very large” R1 universities achieve this classification.

Strategic issues:

- Executive Order update
 - There are about 30 executive orders that could possibly impact George Mason. The orders are subdivided into 3 categories:
 - DEI:
 - George Mason eliminated, amended, reduced, renamed or paused (while under review) programs to move DEI infrastructure into compliance with current federal directives.
 - Country of origin (to include immigration status and foreign aid support):
 - Dramatic changes to graduate enrollments are being managed.
 - The university developed a process to support current graduate students who are affected by updated visa revocation and deportation policies. Fourteen (14) students had their visas revoked; all visas were restored, but 8 did not return to the university.
 - Government agency restructure
 - Thirty-eight (38) current research projects have been paused or terminated. The university developed a process to manage those affected along with an initiative to appeal projects that potentially were terminated in error. The situation changes rapidly, one week prior there were 28 projects with a loss of \$13 million that were paused or terminated, now there are 38 projects with a loss of \$16 million.
 - Mason Career Academy: George Mason is supporting graduating students by offering free access to Coursera to get credentials that are in high need from regional employers. The significant drop in opportunities to work with the government and government contractors are impacting student employment. Students will be able to supplement their degree to match the workforce that is available to them. Displaced federal workers will also have access to these courses for a fee.
- Fiscal Realities update
 - The effect of federal executive orders and recent policy changes at the federal and state level are having a significant fiscal impact on the university’s academic and administrative programs. This fiscal impact, coupled with the net effect of unfunded mandates, create fiscal uncertainty for the upcoming fiscal year and reinforce the need for a tuition increase.
 - Three areas of uncertainty:
 - Reductions in research expenditures and awards (up to \$16M, \$3M in indirect cost).
 - Reductions in graduate student tuition due to visa denials (up to \$12M). There are about 4,000 foreign graduate students who pay full tuition; 45% of foreign graduate students come from India, their visas are being denied by their home country.

- Unfunded mandates (about \$23M) have cost the university about \$122M since FY20. Mason must cut programs every year or increase enrollments to cover the expense.
 - Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program (VMSDEP) provides tuition benefits at Virginia public colleges and universities to the spouses and children of military service members who were killed, missing in action, taken prisoner, or who became at least 90% disabled due to military service.
 - Unfunded compensation stems from the fact that the Commonwealth only covers about 50% of an employee's state-mandated raise. The institution is required to provide the remainder.
- Budget mitigation is achieved through:
 - Revenue enhancements: Patriot Investment Fund, Masonvale ground lease termination, and Vernon Smith Hall acquisition. Every additional student gives us net marginal resources.
 - Cost savings/cost avoidance: reduced positions, retirement incentive program, Vernon Smith Hall rent expense elimination, Freedom Aquatic & Fitness Center renegotiation, savings from parking, janitorial, and library services, and energy efficiency improvements.
- Mason tuition increases are not impacting the number of applications, noting that applications grew 17% while tuition increased by 11% over a 5-year period.
 - President Washington is sensitive to the cost of tuition, as he paid his college tuition, then received an ROTC scholarship. Every other Virginia peer institution has raised or is expected to raise tuition.
- Strategic Plan update:
 - The university is in year 3 of 5 of implementation, and is doing very well with 73% aligned action initiatives in progress, 14% completed, 5% not yet started, and 9% deferred. More details are in the meeting materials.
- 6-Year Planning Process this summer:
 - Two-year review of a six-year process to be completed in time for the August meeting.
 - State reviewers, OP-Six, provided feedback on Mason's plan:
 - The tuition discount rate for out-of-state students has reached 40%. The out-of-state tuition rate is three times the in-state tuition rate. Even with the discounted rate, the cost to out-of-state tuition is higher than in-state tuition so those students' aid is an institutional investment with a net positive return.
 - Auxiliary fund balances: Mason has a large reserve and has been spending down the fund with the acquisition of Vernon Smith Hall.
 - The two-year plan for budget reductions worked exceedingly well with the critical vacancy process and vacant position eliminations.

Discussion ensued:

- Visitor Brown asked what Coursera will cost the university. President Washington responded that the range would be \$400,000-700,000 annually. Credentials are paid for by Mason, not the student.
- Ms. Hoffman emphasized the value of the Mason Career Academy, as it is a direct need for her as a graduating student whose job opportunity is no longer available. This is very much needed by graduate students now. President Washington stated the academy will be available in a few weeks. This problem did not exist a month ago, so the university is coming together on this initiative quickly.
- Visitor Rosen asked about the plan for increasing state funding, gifts, and fundraising so that funding comes from other sources instead of students. University fundraising is at 77% of its goal. Typically, the biggest donations come in the summer. Later this spring, he will make a fundraising trip to

California. Dr. Washington added that he believes in the fundraising goal – if they reach the fundraising goal – 5 of the 6 highest fundraising years for the university have been in the past 5 years.

- Visitor Brown praised the president's report and would appreciate having it in advance to read thoroughly and process it. He then asked about how many degree programs have been cut in the past 4 years. President Washington responded that George Mason has established more and cancelled more programs than our R1 peers combined. The provost's new budget model will give units the incentive to take a critical look at their programs.
- Visitor Blackman is concerned that the university has an income statement problem. He noted increasing costs, including additional costs from the state. He remarked how lean the operations were at Mason and advocated that the priority is doing what it takes to deliver a quality education.

VI. University Policy 4030 (ACTION ITEM)

A. Name, Image & Likeness Intercollegiate Athletics (Code of VA: §23.1-408.1)

Rector Stimson recognized Marvin Lewis, Assistant Vice President and Director of Intercollegiate Athletics, and Malcolm Grace, Deputy Athletic Director, Compliance and NCAA Governance, to provide insights on University Policy 4030 specific to Name, Image & Likeness (NIL) for Intercollegiate Athletics.

Mr. Lewis and Mr. Grace presented a proposal to align George Mason University's NIL policy with the new state framework (enacted April 2024) along with the anticipated NCAA settlement. They stressed the need for policy approval to allow preparation time post-House v. NCAA developments. Mr. Grace clarified NIL arrangements must be approved by the Director of Athletics and managed through a clearinghouse system.

Summary of Policy Statement:

- University may provide permissible benefits to a student-athlete (SA) or prospective student athlete (PSA) for the use of their NIL.
- University may directly enter NIL agreements with current and prospective student-athletes.
- The University shall not enter an agreement with a SA or PSA for "pay for play."
- SAs are not considered employees based on their status as student-athletes.

Discussion ensued:

- Visitor Blackman warned that opting into the NCAA agreement is essential for maintaining an athletics program, costing \$8 million a year. He cited the \$700 million historical revenue impact from the 2006 Final Four. Opting in could bring in revenue from Atlantic-10 television revenue sharing.
- President Washington noted direct "pay to play" is prohibited and emphasized uncertainty regarding final outcomes of the House settlement. Mr. Lewis responded that the policy allows flexibility to provide NIL benefits without direct pay.
- Vice Rector Meese asked if the policy was coordinated with counsel's office and state law. Mr. Lewis confirmed alignment.
- Visitor Brown advocated for greater board oversight than existing athletic liaisons. President Washington proposed creating an athletics committee to deal with the changing landscape of athletics. Secretary Alabay recommended the University of Maryland model as best practice. Several visitors, including Visitors Brown, Meese, and Alabay supported the committee proposal. Visitor Meese will include this as part of the bylaw review this summer.
- Visitor Brown expressed concern about protecting student-athletes from exploitation while protecting the university from liability as it seeks to support students who do not have an agent or financial advice support. He recommended the university consult a sports lawyer to provide best-in-class advice to address the issue.

- Visitor Pence recommended against approving the policy immediately, citing unresolved financial commitments for next year's budget and the unsettled situation of the *House v. NCAA* case in terms of restoring students cut from athletic programs. Mr. Lewis clarified the university does not intend to allocate \$10 million immediately for NIL deals, nor use student fees, only generated revenues would cover this expense.
- Visitor Cooper sought clarification on the "no pay to play" principle. Mr. Grace explained "pay for play" prohibits compensating athletes for roster membership and limits NIL to endorsement or licensing deals.
- Visitor Rosen described the policy as a flexible response to a challenging situation and inquired about broader university sentiment from faculty and students. Dr. Simmons noted minimal faculty discussion, which was surprising.
- Secretary Alacbay inquired about A-10 peers' decisions in regards to the framework. Mr. Lewis stated that 13 of 14 institutions have notified their intention to opt into the framework.
- Rector Stimson expressed concern about potentially losing recruits, as some contracts contain clauses tied to policy approval. Rector summarized two options:
 - Table the policy for further legal consultation, risking potential athlete losses.
 - Approve the policy and revisit as circumstances evolve.

Rector Stimson **MOVED** that the Board approve University Policy 4030 on Name, Image & Likeness Intercollegiate Athletics as they were provided in the meeting materials. The motion was **SECONDED** by Visitor Prowitt. **MOTION CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE.**

VII. Committee Reports

A. Research Committee

Visitor Prowitt reported on the Research Committee meeting, providing a summary of the presentation received by Andre Marshall, Vice President for Research, Innovation, and Economic Impact. Visitor Prowitt, in her farewell to the board, thanked the members and highlighted her involvement in selecting President Washington and the friendships she has gained across political lines. She concluded by thanking the students for being resilient and inspiring.

B. Audit, Risk, and Compliance Committee

Secretary Alacbay reported on the Audit, Risk, and Compliance Committee meeting, providing a summary of the presentations received by Zachary Borgerding, Auditor of Public Accounts; Chris DiTresi and Melissa Perez, Office of Research Integrity and Assurance; Derek Butler, Deputy University Auditor; Aurali Dade, Interim Vice President and Chief Risk Officer; Vincent Lacovara, Associate Vice President, Institutional Compliance; and Charmaine Madison, Vice President and Chief Information Officer.

Secretary Alacbay thanked Chair Oberoi for her leadership and restated Visitor Oberoi's farewell to the committee, thanking the George Mason community, faculty, staff, students, Dr. Washington, and fellow board members.

C. Development Committee

Visitor Peterson reported on the April 17 Development Committee meeting, providing a summary of the presentations received by Trishana Bowden, Vice President, Advancement and Alumni Relations; Sumeet Shrivastava, Chair, GMU Foundation; Cheryl Druehl, Senior Associate Dean for Faculty Affairs and Research; Rebecca Howick, Director of Operations and Engagement; and David Tarter, Executive Director, Center for Real Estate Entrepreneurship.

D. Finance and Land Use Committee

1. Financial Matters

a. **FY 2026 University Operating Budget, Tuition and Fees (ACTION ITEM)**

2. **Capital Matters**

a. **Six-Year Capital Plan (ACTION ITEM)**

b. **Land Use Certification (ACTION ITEM)**

c. **SciTech Dominion Transmission Easement (ACTION ITEM)**

Visitor Pence provided a summary of the Finance & Land Use Committee meeting on April 10, providing a summary of the presentations given by Dan Stephens, Interim Vice President for Finance and Chief Financial Officer, and Alex Iszard, Assistant Vice President of Planning, Design and Construction.

Chair Pence noted that the committee voted bring the following action items to the full board:

- A budget with no increase in tuition and a 2.5% increase in student fees.
- George Mason's Six-Year Capital Plan, which authorizes projects due for initiation in FY26 that only utilize Mason funding, as well as those being submitted to the Commonwealth for funding approval.
- The annual Land Use Certification submission to the Commonwealth, with significant changes from the last report being three easements on our campuses.
- A new Dominion Transmission Easement on the SciTech campus.

Visitor Pence then **MOVED** that the Board approve the FY26 University Budget within the scenario ranges detailed in the Board Book, but with a 0% increase for in-state FY26 Tuition and a 2.5% increase in the Mandatory Student Fee. The motion was **SECONDED** by Visitor Brown. (Original motion)

Visitor Peterson proposed to **AMEND VISITOR PENCE'S MOTION**, that the Board approve the FY26 University Budget within the scenario ranges detailed in the Board Book, with a 2.5% increase to in-state and out-of-state tuition and the Mandatory Student Fee. The amendment was **SECONDED** by Visitor Blackman. (Second Motion and the staff recommendation)

Visitor Burke proposed to **AMEND VISITOR PENCE'S MOTION**, that the Board approve the FY26 University Budget within the scenario ranges detailed in the Board Book, but with a 0% increase for in-state and out-of-state tuition and a 2.5% increase in the Mandatory Student Fee. The amendment was **SECONDED** by Visitor Pence.

Discussion ensued:

- Visitor Blackman urged immediate action, emphasizing the impacts of unfunded mandates and rising market-driven costs.
- Visitor Brown opposed the increase, arguing it places financial burden on students amid broader economic hardship for families, job losses, and tariffs. He stressed focusing on cost containment rather than tuition hikes.
- Visitor Burke proposed her amendment, stating the university has a spending problem and not a revenue problem.
- Ms. Cuesta supported fair wages for faculty but warned that any tuition increase would result in students working more jobs, facing food insecurity, and increased financial strain – potentially impacting student enrollment.
- Visitor Rosen noted potential record levels of state support and suggested more aggressive fundraising and cost-cutting rather than increasing student costs which impacts affordability and access.
- Ms. Hoffman countered, noting Mason is chronically underfunded and must act pragmatically, arguing that 2.5% is a modest increase aimed at protecting the institution's long-term stability.
- Vice Rector Meese entered undecided, acknowledging that either decision would, in different ways, support students.

- Ms. Spence referenced Carnegie's report, emphasizing Mason's brand is centered on access and outcomes, not being inexpensive.
- Dr. Washington reminded the board that students who make \$80,000 or less pay no tuition and out-of-state students pay a substantially discounted rate. A small increase would not put them in a difficult financial situation.

Following the discussion, Rector Stimson called for the **VOTE ON VISITOR PETERSON'S AMENDMENT.**

The **MOTION FAILED BY MAJORITY ROLL CALL VOTE.**

Yes: 6

No: 8

Absent: Visitors Merrick and Oberoi

Rector Stimson asked Visitor Burke to restate her amendment for clarity and called for any discussion. Visitor Brown stated that a 0% tuition for in-state students was his priority. Rector Stimson then called for the **VOTE ON VISITOR BURKE'S AMENDMENT.**

The **MOTION FAILED BY MAJORITY ROLL CALL VOTE.**

Yes: 6

No: 7

Abstain: Secretary Alacbay

Absent: Visitors Merrick and Oberoi

Visitor Pence then **WITHDREW HIS ORIGINAL MOTION.**

Visitor Brown **MOVED** that the Board approve the FY26 University Budget within the Scenario ranges detailed in the Board Book, but with a 0% increase for in-state tuition, an increase in out-of-state undergraduate tuition of \$528, an increase in out-of-state graduate tuition of \$720, an increase in out-of-state non-JD law tuition of \$1,022, and a 2.5% increase in the Mandatory Student Fee. The motion was **SECONDED** by Visitor Alacbay.

Rector Stimson then asked if there was any discussion.

Visitor Rosen restated his opposition to the motion, as it once again put the burden on students without much financial benefit. Dr. Washington, with further details provided by David Burge, Vice President for Enrollment, responded that there are 8,000 out-of-state students, 4,000 of them are graduate students, so the tuition increase from that segment alone would yield approximately \$2.8 million.

The **MOTION CARRIED BY MAJORITY ROLL CALL VOTE.**

Yes: 10

No: 4

Absent: Visitors Merrick and Oberoi

Visitor Pence then **MOVED** that the Board approve the Six-Year Capital Plan and the Land Use Certification as detailed in the Board Book. The motion was **SECONDED** by Visitor Brown.

The **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY ROLL CALL VOTE.**

Yes: 14

Absent: Visitors Merrick and Oberoi

Visitor Pence then **MOVED** that the Board approve the SciTech Dominion Transmission Easement as detailed in the Board Book. The motion was **SECONDED** by Vice Rector Meese.

The **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY ROLL CALL VOTE.**

Yes: 13

Abstain: Visitor Peterson

Absent: Visitors Merrick and Oberoi

E. Academic Programs, Diversity and University Community Committee

Visitor Burke reported on the activities of the April 17 APDUC Committee meeting, providing a summary of the presentations from Provost Antony and Solon Simmons, Faculty Senate President. Visitor Burke then **MOVED** that the board approve the following action items, en bloc, as they are provided in the meeting materials:

- Proposed Changes to the Faculty Handbook
- Faculty Actions
 - Promotion and/or Tenure
 - Conferral of Emeritus/Emerita Status
 - Elections of New Tenured Faculty
 - Special Rank Change

The motion was **SECONDED** by Visitor Pence. **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY ROLL CALL VOTE.**

Yes: 14

Absent: Visitors Merrick and Oberoi

Visitor Burke continued her report, sharing that the APDUC Committee discussed a proposed resolution on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI). Sharnnia Artis, Vice President of Access, Compliance, and Community, provided an overview of the steps the university has already taken to align its practices with current legal guidance. The committee chair decided to table the resolution for now and invited Dr. Artis to present to the board.

Dr. Artis provided the timeline of the university's actions and changes on DEI as they were accomplished in three phases:

Phase 1 Review of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (August 2023 – May 2024):

- Formation of two committees with board and university staff.
- *The Mason Way* report released revisiting Mason's approach to DEI within legal constraints.
- Interim Provost Walsh paused proposed Just Societies curriculum requirements.

Phase 2 June 2024 – December 2024, after *The Mason Way* Report:

- Overall, Mason eliminated 5 positions, amended 11 positions, realigned 3 DEI related positions for compliance and student support, and updated our nondiscrimination policy.
- Office for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Office Program Changes:
 - Eliminated 2 out of 19 positions, and realigned 3 position descriptions and job titles.
 - Dissolved the Office for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.
 - Ended two initiatives: Anti-Racism and Inclusive Excellence (ARIE) Initiative and Inclusive Excellence Plans.
- Academic Units and Provost Office Personnel Changes:
 - Realigned 4 position descriptions and titles.
 - Ended the Chief DEI Officer Executive Certificate in Costello College of Business.
 - Expanded initiatives focusing on accessibility, mental health, and dialogue programming.
- University Life:
 - Eliminated 3 positions and realigned 4.

- Formed the Center for Leadership and Intercultural Engagement (CLIE). This center partners with the Office for Access, Compliance, and Community to respond to bias incidents. It also highlights the Black Male Success Initiative.
- Focused new programming on interfaith development, constructive dialogues, and anti-Semitism learning communities, including the Braver Angels debates.

Phase 3 January 2025-April 2025:

- January: external SCHEV review of DEI, student populations, and compliance.
- February 27: Passed antisemitism resolution.
- Dissolved Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion; formed Office for Access, Compliance, and Community (OACC).
- Dissolved or Eliminated promotion of race-conscious third-party opportunities, partnership with The PhD Project, use of Affirmative Action Plans for Women and Minorities, use of diversity statements in hiring and promotion, and the Director of Supplier Diversity position.
- Paused 112 GMU Foundation scholarships for review and the Black Male Success Initiative (BMSI), the only program related to race which helps with retention.
- Reviewed or realigned institutionally funded scholarships and grants, the Hampton Summer Immersion Program, employee resource and affinity groups, trainings and professional development, all student life programs, and digital platforms for legal compliance.
- Six research grants have been terminated that seem to have a gender diversity, equity and inclusion-related research focus.

Dr. Artis concluded her presentation stating that the university will continuously review programs to ensure that there is a welcoming environment, free from unfair and illegal preferences, and open to all. The university wants to ensure students have the tools they need to be successful at George Mason and when they graduate.

Discussion ensued:

- Visitor Brown raised 3 questions and concerns:
 1. The need for third-party review for objectivity in compliance certification. Dr. Artis has been in conversation with University Counsel about working with a third party on compliance certification and that McGuire Woods is reviewing the paused 112 scholarships externally. Dr. Washington and Visitor Cooper concurred on a third-party review.
 2. Asked about changes over scope of prohibitions (race, gender, orientation, etc.): Dr. Artis confirmed Mason's long-standing protections for all protected classes. Dr. Washington clarified that most changes are in alignment with executive orders which have primarily focused on race. After review of university programs, almost everything was in compliance so very little had to change. Dr. Artis added that diversity statements were broad but are now gone so no one uses any diversity statements for any identities.
 3. Asked about what has changed in bias incident reporting: Dr. Artis described how Mason's approach is not punitive, so when students submit any type of bias, the university connects with them to understand their concerns and provide a referral and offer resources. It serves as a climate gauge, and remains unchanged.
- Several participants commended the board leadership's measured, deliberate approach on this topic, including Visitor Blackman and Dr. Simmons.
- Dr. Simmons expressed concerns about how to address legacies of discrimination while complying with law. He also asked if it would be acceptable for a faculty member to include a lived experience in their cover letter as part of their application materials. Visitor Brown suggested the use of a third party to determine compliance. Vice Rector Meese added that academic units are prohibited from using

diversity statements but applicants may choose to include a personal narrative if they believe that will help their application.

- Rector Stimson queried decisions around ending the ARIE initiative and the selection of Dr. Nolan Cabrera, a keynote speaker with partisan DEI critiques, highlighting that it was funded by Mason and outside sponsors. Dr. Artis stated that the ARIE initiative ended because it was designed to exist for only three years. A committee of faculty, staff, and students selected Dr. Cabrera to speak, with over 100 presenters overall. Rector Stimson asked who represented opposing viewpoints, highlighting that Mason is a public institution with certain obligations to free speech. Dr. Simmons requested clarity that faculty would still be allowed to express those views or organize conferences. Rector Stimson and Visitor Blackman stated that diverse viewpoints must be represented to some degree if it is sponsored by a public institution. President Washington reaffirmed Mason's academic freedom and hosting a wide-range of viewpoints.
- Ms. Hoffman voiced disappointment over time spent on debates on matters where the university is primarily compliant, believing that time could be better spent discussing student needs like tuition, employment, and support services.
- Visitor Cooper requested data on terminated positions and eliminated DEI programs' cost savings. Dr. Artis replied over \$600,000 savings from eliminated positions, either from incumbents being released or leaving vacancies unfilled. Visitor Cooper requested more details on position, programming, and research grant terminations and specifics on the Hampton Program's legal review.
- Visitor Rosen emphasized the importance of maintaining an inclusive environment for all while ensuring legal compliance. He warned against misinterpreting the desire for DEI compliance as opposition to inclusion itself. Secretary Alacbay noted that recent student listening sessions yielded identified areas of common ground.

VIII. Closed Session

- A. Acquisition of Real Property (Code of VA: §2.2-3711.A.3)
- B. Discussion of the award of public contracts (Code of VA: §2.2-3711.A.29)
- C. Personnel Matter to discuss the performance goals of the President (Code of VA: §2.2-3711.A.1)
- D. Consultation with Legal Counsel pertaining to actual or probable litigation (Code of VA: §2.2-3711.A.7)
- E. Consultation with Legal Counsel regarding the aforementioned items (Code of VA: §2.2-3711.A.8)

Vice Rector Meese **MOVED** that the board go into Closed Session under the provisions of

- Section 2.2-3711.A.3 for the discussion of potential acquisition of certain real property to further the mission of the University where discussion in open session would adversely affect the university's bargaining position and negotiating strategy, specifically related to real property to be used for housing;
- Section 2.2-3711.A.29 for Discussion of the award of public contracts involving the expenditure of public funds, including interviews of bidders or offerors, and discussion of the terms or scope of such contracts, where discussion in an open session would adversely affect the bargaining position or negotiating strategy of the public body;
- Section 2.2-3711.A.1 for a Personnel Matter to discuss the performance goals of the President;
- Section 2.2-3711.A.7 for Consultation with legal counsel pertaining to actual or probable litigation including briefings on:

- Akerman v. GMU
- Morrison v. GMU et al.
- de Raspede Ross v. Mason
- Zahabi v. George Mason University et al.
- Section 2.2-3711.A.8 for consultation with legal counsel regarding the aforementioned items and university compliance with applicable Executive Orders.

The motion was **SECONDED** by Secretary Alacabay. **MOTION CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE.**

Following closed session, Vice Rector Meese **MOVED** that the board go back into public session and further moved that by roll call vote the board affirm that only public business matters lawfully exempted from the open meeting requirements under the Freedom of Information Act were heard, discussed or considered in the closed meeting, and that only such business matters that were identified in the motion to go into a closed meeting were heard, discussed or considered in the closed meeting. Any member of the board who believes that there was a departure from the requirements as stated, shall so state prior to taking the roll call, indicating the substance of the departure that, in his or her judgment, has taken place. **ALL PRESENT BOARD MEMBERS RESPONDED IN THE AFFIRMATIVE BY ROLL CALL VOTE.**

Absent: Visitors Brown, Burke, Chimaladinne, Merrick, Oberoi, and Ohlhausen.

Rector Stimson then **MOVED** that the board adopt the following resolution:

WHEREAS, Chapter 15, Title 23.1 of the Code of Virginia of 1950, as amended (the "Virginia Code"), establishes a public corporation under the name and style of The Rector and Visitors of George Mason University (the "University") which is governed by a Board of Visitors (the "Board") vested with the supervision, management and control of the University;

WHEREAS, by Article 4, Chapter 10, Title 23.1 of the Code of Virginia of 1950, the University entered into a management agreement with the Commonwealth of Virginia which was enacted as Chapters 76 and 77 of the Acts of Assembly of 2021 (Special Session I) which, classifies the University as a public institution of higher education and empowers the University with the authority to undertake and implement major capital projects, including the acquisition of any interest in land;

WHEREAS, on May 1, 2025, the Board approved the submission of the University's Six-Year Capital Plan which included Faculty Staff Housing ("Capital Plan") and

WHEREAS, the Board deems it desirable and in the best interests of the University to acquire that certain real property discussed in Closed Session on this date (the "Property").

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

1. The University is authorized to acquire the Property with Non-General Funds at the agreed upon price and upon such other terms and conditions as the President or others authorized to act on his behalf may, in their discretion, deem advisable;
2. The Board hereby authorizes, directs and empowers the President or the Executive Vice President for Strategic Initiatives and Chief of Staff to execute, for and on behalf of the University and in its name, any and all documents required in connection with the acquisition of the Property,

3. Any actions by the aforementioned officers or those delegated to act on their behalf within the authority conferred hereby, taken prior to the date of this resolution, are hereby ratified, confirmed and approved as the acts and deeds of the University; and

4. That this resolution is effective immediately.

The motion was **SECONDED** by Vice Rector Meese. The **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY ROLL CALL VOTE. (Attachment 1).**

Yes: 10

Absent: Visitors Brown, Burke, Chimaladinne, Merrick, Oberoi, and Ohlhausen.

Rector Stimson asked if there was any additional business. Visitor Blackman, noting that it is likely his last board meeting, provided farewell remarks, expressing his gratitude and that he was honored to be on the board for eight years. He added that President Cabrera said serving on the board would be the greatest thing he could do and he was right.

Rector Stimson thanked Visitor Blackman for his service on the board. He then adjourned the meeting at 5:08 p.m.

Scott Nichols
Interim Secretary pro tem

Attachment 1: Real Estate Resolution May 1, 2025.

Attachment 2: Public Comments (35 pages)